

THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE

413

liang before the Japanese in the autumn of 1931 weakened Chiang, for the former had been a strong supporter of the latter's government. In December, 1931, to pacify his opponents and the many vociferous students who had flocked to Nanking and were clamoring against him for his failure to take more vigorous action against Japan, Chiang Kai-shek resigned the titular headship of the civil regime. However, he remained the dominant military figure in the Nanking Government and as such was still the most powerful man in the nation.

RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN POWERS, 1911-1919:

FURTHER HUMILIATION

While the downfall of the Manchus, the subsequent struggles between rival aspirants for power, and the attempts to devise new governmental machinery were distracting the country, momentous changes were taking place in China's relations with other nations. For about eight years China descended still farther into the valley of humiliation. Then began one of the strangest spectacles of the time. China, although distraught by civil strife and utterly impotent to obtain her will by armed force, began to make headway against the powers and to cancel the privileges which, for more than three-quarters of a century, she had been progressively conceding to aliens. This was halted only by the events in Manchuria which began in 1931.

First came the further humiliation. The outbreak of the revolution of 1911, it will be recalled, had been hastened by the conclusion of a loan with a four-power syndicate for the centralization of railway administration due to the proposed construction of lines in Central, South, and West China. This loan,

while designed
in part to allay international friction, increased
foreign financial
interests, and, accordingly, foreign control.

The first years after the revolution witnessed
further en-
croachments by foreigners. China was weaker
and the powers
were still rapacious and strong.

Both Great Britain and Russia took advantage of
the situation
to extend their spheres of influence—the former
into Tibet and
the latter into Mongolia. In 1904, the British,
alarmed by Rus-
sian machinations in Tibet and moved by a desire
for commerce,
dispatched an armed expedition which fought its
way to Lhasa